

RE: 10th Street SW and Banneker Connection

I'd like to support the goals and policies of the SW Eco-District Plan and applaud NCPC's efforts to begin implementing the plan by developing design standards for 10th Street and Banneker Connection. These comments are meant as constructive design input to further the project forward.

10th Street has a strategic location on axis between the Smithsonian and Banneker Park. Rebuilt as the L'Enfant Esplanade as part of "Urban Renewal", the result is both bland and alienating, with no character or human scale. The NCPC proposed plan makes excellent suggestions to enliven the space with events, fountains and landscape features. The diagrams communicate these intentions very clearly. As the process moves forward, we encourage you to further the design to mediate the scale between the faceless monumental architecture and the proposed landscape features.

Banneker Park is at the natural escarpment and offers the magnificent prospect of the Potomac River. This potential has yet to be realized; it is desolate and dismal, a meaningless shapeless left over space. The NCPC's proposal recognizes the need to connect to the River. We encourage NCPC to have higher ambitions and pursue a much grander vision.

Banneker Park ought to be completely reconfigured to create a significant place and act as the key hinge connecting 10th Street down to the riverfront. The connection to the waterfront calls for a major active pedestrian bridge over the highway and magnificent stairs like the Spanish Steps in Rome or the Potemkin Stairs in Odessa, Ukraine, (made famous by Sergei Eisenstein in the 1925 movie the Battleship Potemkin). This grand vision can also offer practical benefits. Redefining the space with new buildings can finance the cost of the bridge and stairs and the level changes can include parking and facilitate connections to the Metro at L'Enfant Plaza.

Banneker can be both a **formal hinge** rotating the axis from the Smithsonian to the Potomac River and a **functional hub**, serving as a **major gateway** for buses and cars with easy connections to Metro access at L'Enfant Plaza. Great care should be taken in designing this hinge, since it is on axis with the Smithsonian Castle. A new trolley along 10th Street can make this transit hub work more effectively.

We encourage NCPC to develop the design with character and communicate this vision with verve, to allow the public to experience the potential of the space at day and night, at different seasons, during different events.

Lourdes Escobar, one of my thesis students, just completed her thesis project for a proposal for the Banneker site; we would appreciate the opportunity to share her design and process with you in the new year.

Happy New Year!

